



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Outline of opening remarks by Irish Government Delegation

Chairman,

I should like to begin by thanking you, Sir Ninian, for coming here today to preside over our meeting. I should also like to thank the Australian Government for releasing you to take on this task and for also making Mr. Thompson available. We look forward to working under your Chairmanship.

This, as we see it, is a practical meeting to deal with practical issues and not an occasion for rhetoric. Nevertheless as we come to the table it is hard not to be conscious of what this process is about. We are seeking to work together around this table to find a way between all of us to lift the heavy burden of history which weighs on all of us in these islands. What we seek to do is to use the goodwill which does exist so abundantly between the peoples of both islands to help to resolve the remaining unresolved problems of our common history. Certainly the mandate from our Government with which we come here today is to approach the process to which we have all committed ourselves in a spirit of goodwill and in a genuine effort to reach agreement.

How do we see the present meeting? In my view it should be a practical meeting. Last year, after long negotiations, we all agreed on a document of 26 March, 1991 setting a framework within which we would work. That document made it clear that there are three main relationships which must be addressed and which must find adequate expression if a real and genuine settlement is to be reached. That point is a fundamental point; and it was recognised in the structure set for the talks, which were to take place in three strands.

I will cite, if I may, some key points from that document of 26 March, 1991 which are of particular relevance to our discussion today. The two Governments which had signed the Anglo Irish Agreement made it clear that they would be "prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement or structure if such an arrangement can be arrived at through direct discussion and negotiation between all the parties concerned".

Another point of particular importance was the agreement that "it would be necessary to have launched all three sets of discussions within weeks of each other." We all agreed also that, "in order to ensure a full airing of the issues, it will be open to each of the parties to raise any aspect of these relationships including constitutional issues or any other matter which it considers relevant". All concerned also agreed "to participate in good faith" : and it was accepted by all the parties that "nothing would be finally agreed in any Strand until everything is agreed in the talks as a whole."

Taking account of these guidelines agreed on 26 March, 1991 we feel that our approach today to this meeting, which is in preparation for Strand Two, should be a practical and sensible one. It should be directed to smoothing the path to enable Strand Two, and in due course Strand Three, to get under way, bearing in mind that we are all agreed that "all three sets of discussions should be underway within weeks of each other."

More particularly in our work here today, it seems to me right to work towards an agenda which would be broad enough in its structure to allow all issues which any party wishes to raise to be covered. We feel that this could best be done by working from the general to the particular.

The agenda should therefore allow for general statements to be made at the outset. All of you here have been participating in intensive discussions in Strand One. We were not participants in those talks. We are now moving towards Strand Two where the Irish Government will be involved. It seems to me right, therefore, in preparing an agenda for that Strand to allow scope for general statements to be made at the outset which will be directed to the nature of the problem. I am thinking not just of what the Irish Government would wish to say but of what other parties around the table might wish to say directly to the Irish Government.

In approaching this meeting, we had thought it better not to put forward a specific draft agenda at this stage but rather to suggest first to others around the table the broad lines of an approach to the agenda on which I think we could all agree. This approach would first allow for statements of the problem and the issues of identity and allegiance as they are seen by the various parties. The agenda could then move to the requirements to be met if that problem is to be addressed. It could then go on to consider structures which could meet those requirements. Then there would be a need for views on the relationship of those structures to existing structures; and finally there would then be need to discuss the consequential measures and prepare the way for Strand Three discussions.

The advantage of this approach is that it would be possible, within a very general framework, to accommodate specific issues which any party wish to raise. We should bear in mind that the statement of 26 March makes it clear that "it is open to each of the parties to raise any aspect of these relationships including constitutional issues or any other matter which it considers relevant." So it will always remain open to any party to raise any matter. If it seemed desirable, in due course, we could put forward a specific draft which would give expression to this approach. But for the moment I think it might be preferable not to focus on any particular wording or formula but to try to see if we could all agree on the general approach I have outlined.

The word "Strand" to me suggests intertwining. All three strands are inter-connected. In order to get real progress, therefore we must carry through with the commitment of 26

March, 1991 that all three strands "will be underway within weeks of each other". The sooner we get down to addressing all three sets of discussions, the better. All of us are, of course, protected by the agreement of 26 March, 1991 that "nothing would be finally agreed in any Strand until everything is agreed in the talks as a whole".

If I may summarise, therefore, we believe that our approach here this morning should be sensible and practical, designed to get us to serious discussions in Strand Two and to allow for the general exchanges which will be necessary in that Strand. The agenda should be structured in broad terms and in a way which can accommodate any issue which any party may wish to raise.

Possible Agenda for Strand Two

1. Chairman's opening remarks.
2. Approval of agenda.
3. Opening statements by participating delegations on relationships among the people of the island of Ireland.
4. Issues of identity and allegiance.
5. Requirements to reconcile and to acknowledge the rights of the two major traditions that exist in Ireland.
6. Possible new structures and arrangements to meet these requirements and give practical and symbolic expression to both traditions.
7. Relationship of new structures to other institutions.
8. Consequential measures needed to implement or consolidate new structures and arrangements.
9. Matters referred for consideration to Strand Three.
10. Approval of conclusions and closing statements.

AGENDA PROPOSED BY THE SDLP

1. Chairman's Address
2. Adoption of Agenda
3. Opening statements by representatives of the two Governments and the political parties.
4. Relationships among the people of the island of Ireland
 - (a) to identify areas of common interest;
 - (b) to discuss issues of identity and allegiance.
5. North-South relationships in the context of the European Community.
6. Requirements
 - (a) to acknowledge the rights of both major traditions in Ireland;
 - (b) to accommodate those rights;
 - (c) to create the means of reconciling both traditions;
7. Structures and arrangements to meet these requirements and to give institutional expression to them.
8. Relationship of new structures and arrangements with other institutions.
9. Means of endorsement of agreement reached.
10. Measures consequential on the implementation of the endorsement.

POSSIBLE AGENDA FOR STRAND 2

1. Chairman's opening statement
2. Report from Chairman of Strand 1
3. Approval of agenda
4. Opening presentations (to be delivered and tabled by the two Governments and the four political parties)
5. Responses to opening presentations
6. Fundamental aspects of the problem: underlying realities; identity; allegiance; constitutional
7. Common interests (including matters such as economic cooperation and development, security cooperation and law enforcement) and themes
8. Other requirements to address problem
9. Possible institutional arrangements to meet the requirements (including principles to govern any such arrangements)
10. Relationship of any new institutional arrangements to other structures, including the EC
11. Consequential measures needed to implement new structures
12. Consideration of how an overall agreement might be endorsed
13. Matters referred for consideration to Strand 3
14. Approval of conclusions and closing statements

ISSUED ON BEHALF OF SIR NINIAN STEPHEN, CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING

MEDIA RELEASE

A meeting of representatives of the UK and Irish Governments and the Northern Ireland parties was held today at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre in London to discuss a possible agenda for Strand 2 of the Talks process. Delegations comprised senior officials from the two Governments and senior figures from the Alliance, Social Democratic and Labour, Ulster Democratic Unionist and Ulster Unionist Parties. The meeting was convened and chaired by Sir Ninian Stephen pursuant to an invitation which the two Governments had issued to him on 12 June.

The parties completed consideration of a possible agenda for Strand 2.

19 June 1992

MINUTE OF MEETING HELD ON 19 JUNE 1992 IN QE2 CONFERENCE
CENTRE TO DISCUSS A POSSIBLE AGENDA FOR STRAND 2

1. The Chairman welcomed the delegations and outlined the purpose of the meeting. He stated that the meeting was not the opening session of Strand 2 but that the purpose was to discuss a possible agenda for Strand 2 if and when it was decided to move to that stage. He recalled the objectives of Strand 2 as outlined in the agreed statement of 26 March 1991. His suggested agenda for the discussion was agreed without objection. He then invited the parties to make their opening statements.

2. Opening statements were made by each of the delegations. On behalf of the British Government, Mr Chilcot suggested that a procedural approach should be adopted for Strand 2 which would be similar to that of Strand 1. He tabled a possible agenda for consideration (text at Annex 1). On behalf of the Irish Government, Mr Dorr emphasised that the meeting was a practical meeting, that the three strands of the Talks were intertwined and that the most sensible approach to Strand 2 discussions was to attempt to move from general to more particular issues. He tabled a possible agenda (text at Annex 2). For the Alliance party, Mr Close suggested the application of the Strand 1 work method to Strand 2. He

tabled a suggested work plan and draft agenda (text at Annex 3). Mr Mallon, for the SDLP, tabled a proposed agenda but emphasised that any agenda for Strand 2 must allow for full flexibility in the issues discussed. (Text of statement and agenda at Annex 4.) Mr Dodds, for the UDUP, outlined the basis on which his party was attending the meeting, as set out in a letter dated 15 June 1992 from Dr Paisley to the Secretary of State (text of Mr Dodds' statement attached at Annex 5). For the UUP, Mr Maginnis outlined his party's attitude towards a possible agenda and sought certain assurances from the Chairman on procedural matters (full text of statement at Annex 6).

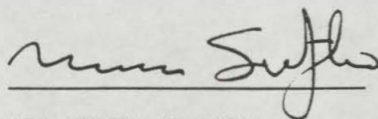
3. The Chairman gave the assurances sought by Mr Maginnis and invited all the delegations to respond to the opening statements. The parties to Strand 1 agreed to consider whether the Chairman and the Irish Government could be given access to relevant documents from Strand 1.

4. After an adjournment, the Chairman tabled a composite draft agenda for Strand 2 on which detailed discussion took place. At the conclusion of discussions the DUP reserved its position on the final document. (Text attached at Annex 7).

5. A brief statement was agreed for issue to the media.

6. A list of participants is attached at Annex 8.

Signed as a correct record

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Ninian Stephen", written over a horizontal line.

SIR NINIAN STEPHEN



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

12 JUNE 1992

TALKS STATEMENT

1. The Secretary of State is not yet proposing the transition to Strand II. However it is his judgement that there is wide agreement on the next steps in the process of the Talks.
2. In the light of exchanges between the Party leaders, he has asked the Irish Government to join with him in inviting Sir Ninian Stephen to convene a meeting next week, to which Sir Ninian would invite representatives of the two Governments and of the four Northern Ireland political Parties participating in the Talks, to discuss a possible agenda for Strand II of the Talks.
3. The Secretary of State also proposed that the two Governments should hold a meeting in Strand III formation which observers from each of the Parties will be invited to attend for at least part of the time, to give preliminary consideration to the issues likely to arise in the Strand.
4. In the meantime, he also proposed that the Strand I sub-Committee should be invited to continue its work on remaining matters.
5. The Government welcomes and endorses the progress made to date through the work of the sub-Committee and looks forward to building upon this progress.

The Secretary of State has confirmed with the Irish Foreign Minister that the Irish Government is content with the propositions in paragraphs 2 and 3 of this statement.